



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee**

March 4, 2022

**HB 5283 AN ACT CONCERNING THE EDUCATION COST SHARING GRANT FORMULA AND
THE FUNDING OF OTHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS.**

**SB 226 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION.**

**HB 5280 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN
CONNECTICUT.**

SB 232 AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXCESS COST GRANT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION.

**SB 228 AN ACT CONCERNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN
PATHWAYS PROGRAMS AND THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE
AVAILABILITY OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND CAREER SCHOOLS AND REGIONAL
AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION CENTERS.**

**HB 5286 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW PRESERVICE
PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS.**

HB 5287 AN ACT CONCERNING REMOTE LEARNING IN CONNECTICUT.

Members of the Committee, my name is Chris Wilson, I am a member of the Bristol Board of Education and I serve on the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education's Executive Committee.

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education supports those bills, like HB 5283, which propose to enhance the state support for public education. The proposal to fully fund ECS in FY 2025 is welcomed – and must be fulfilled through appropriation in the FY 2025 budget.

The economic challenges faced at all of levels of government are felt most intensively at the local level – where we are in the middle of the budget development and adoption season. Many districts have faced several years of 0% budget increases. The Federal ESSER funds to address the impact of the pandemic are extremely important. However, we know these are of limited duration and designed to meet immediate needs. State support is critical for systemic needs that must be sustained. Given the number of new initiatives and reforms put in place by the federal, state and local governments, this is a time where we need to maintain our commitment to our public schools.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the needs of our students and communities. District surveys show significant increases in the number of students experiencing depression. There is a critical need for additional mental health professionals to meet the needs of our students.

We also see data indicating that many of those students who engaged in remote instruction due to the pandemic were not able to progress in their learning. Resources to provide intensive, individualized support for these students will be needed to insure their long-term educational success.

CABE strongly supports efforts to better recognize the needs of some of our most vulnerable students – English Learners and students living in poverty.

Elimination of magnet school tuition payments will provide stability for local school district budgets. It appears that only those magnet schools not operated by a board of education will receive an annual inflation increase, and we urge you to insure appropriate increases for all programs. (Section 2, lines 85-92)

CABE also urges you to remove the cap on the Special Education Excess Cost grant. Continuation of the cap creates an increased hardship on local districts as these costs continue to rise. Removal of the cap on the Special Education Excess Cost Grant will restore the safety net available to districts for these extraordinary educational costs. CABE continues to advocate that Congress meet its long-standing commitment to fund 40% of the cost of special education.

CABE supports SB 226, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education, which allows for continued flexibility on getting meals out to students, which CABE supports. The Department of Education along with districts was very effective in getting meals to as many students as possible during the pandemic. CABE also supports the SDE request for an extension to develop a model curriculum. This will be a valuable tool and it is important that it be developed thoughtfully and thoroughly.

CABE is concerned with the many proposed bills asking more of the Department, knowing they are still helping districts navigate the pandemic, with guidance changing often from the CDC. CABE also has concerns on the potential number of employees who may choose to retire, and the capacity of the SDE to the needs of students and school districts. We urge you to balance new requirements with Department resources.

HB 5280, An Act Concerning the Provision of Bilingual Education in Connecticut, CABE supports an increase in funding for English language learners and the seed grant program for up to 5 districts. In data from the Department of Education, there are 47 districts whose English learners spoke *20 or more* different non-English languages! To support that many students is a challenge that districts continue to need assistance meeting.

SB 232 An Act Concerning the Excess Cost Grant for Special Education, CABE supports removal of the cap on the special education excess cost reimbursement grant. The concept of a tiered reimbursement does not address the cap; it expands eligibility for reimbursement at an unpredictable amount instead of fulfilling the commitment of 4.5 times the average per pupil expenditure.

In Bristol we have long fought for an increase in the special education excess cost reimbursement. Over the last three years we have continued to lose out on millions of dollars.

- **Excess cost received in the 2020-21 fiscal year: \$3,601,565**
 - **In FY21, BPS expended \$11,373,227 in outplacement costs. Of those costs, \$4,175,915 exceeded the 4.5/1.0 thresholds**
- **Excess cost received in the 2019-20 fiscal year: \$3,231,867**
 - **In FY20, BPS expended \$10,042,900 in outplacement costs. Of those costs, \$3,768,281 exceeded the 4.5/1.0 thresholds**
- **Excess cost received in the 2018-19 fiscal year: \$3,810,650**

- **In FY19, BPS expended \$12,217,653 in outplacement costs. Of those costs, \$4,684,755 exceeded the 4.5/1.0 thresholds**

SB 228 An Act Concerning Opportunities for Students to Participate in Pathways Programs and the Provision of Information about the Availability of Technical Education and Career Schools and Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Education Centers. CAFE supports efforts to create new and better pathways to allow students to develop their skills beyond the classroom.

CAFE supports HB 5286, An Act Concerning the Development of a New Preservice Performance Assessment for Teacher Preparation Programs. It is important to avoid artificial barriers to the recruitment of a diverse educator workforce. We know that there are a growing number of educator shortage areas in Connecticut and around the country. The preservice performance assessment must be evidenced-based and incorporate current best practices.

CAFE also supports reducing or eliminating costs or fees charged to students as part of the implementation of the preservice performance assessment.

We need to work together to expand the pool of qualified educators to Connecticut public schools and this bill is one piece of that effort.

HB 5287 An Act Concerning Remote Learning in Connecticut, CAFE is supportive of providing districts with a remote learning model with standards. We know the 9-12 standards have just been established and that the earlier grades may utilize some of those standards.

We appreciate your attention to these issues.